

over the years. He was elected as the Commonwealth attorney for the 35th Judicial Circuit and served in that post from 1964 to 1970. He was also the Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor in 1967.

In addition to his work and positions in politics, Tom gave generously of his time to many worthy causes, including service as the director of the Pikeville Methodist Hospital and as a trustee of Pikeville College. He was the president of the Pikeville Rotary Club and volunteered his time with the Coal Operators Association and the Boy Scouts.

Tom was a Christian who attended Pikeville United Methodist Church. He also served on the church's administrative board. His hobbies included reading, traveling, boating, and being physically active. He loved to travel and had visited all the continents.

Tom is survived by his wife, Myrtle; the two were married on August 21, 1949. He is also survived by his daughters Susan G. Tillotson and Jan E. Sharpe; his sons Kevin N. Ratliff and Chris Ratliff; his grandchildren Elizabeth J. Spraggs, Juliet Kamper, Jonathan K. Wright, Thomas N. Ratliff, Daniel C. Ratliff, and Jordan B. Ratliff; his great-grandchild, Tiara Wright; his sister, Charlene R. Easton; and his brother, Roger E. J. Ratliff.

I want to extend my deepest condolences to Myrtle and to the family in this time of loss. The Commonwealth of Kentucky joins them in mourning this hero and public servant. Tom Ratliff bravely served his country in uniform during World War II, and served his fellow Kentuckians in public office. He was a hero and a patriot who I was proud to know and to call a friend. He will be greatly missed, not only by his family but by his many friends who knew and loved him.

RECOGNIZING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF MIRACLE FLIGHTS FOR KIDS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today I recognize the 30th anniversary of Miracle Flights for Kids.

Since its founding in southern Nevada in 1985, Miracle Flights for Kids has been providing airline tickets for sick children in low-income families. These flights are truly miracles that allow children to receive the specialized medical care they need and otherwise would not have access to due to distance and travel costs. In the beginning, Miracle Flights for Kids was a small organization that served a handful of local children, but today the organization coordinates hundreds of flights a month, including a record 976 flights in April 2015. To date, Miracle Flights for Kids has coordinated more than 92,000 flights resulting in 50 million miles of travel. These flights have helped to save and improve the quality of life for countless children.

Families from across the country and the world contact Miracle Flights for Kids for assistance, and the organiza-

tion works to ensure eligible children have access to the care they need, regardless of how far away the treatment center is located. They have flown children relatively short distances, such as flights from Nevada to California, and longer distances, including flights from Alaska to Colorado. They have even flown children from as far away as Turkey to Maryland. Miracle Flights for Kids also works to ensure that children can travel back to their treatment center as many times as their doctor deems necessary. For instance, they provided more than 40 flights from Ohio to Texas for one little girl so she could receive the medical attention she required.

Having a sick child is a devastating, trying experience for any parent. The services provided by Miracle Flights for Kids give families some peace-of-mind as they focus on getting their child healthy. I commend Miracle Flights for Kids for 30 years of exceptional service to children and families in Nevada and throughout the world. Their work is truly appreciated and admired, and I wish them continued success for years to come.

RECOGNIZING MARGARET A. FOCARINO AND JAMES D. SMITH

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to take a moment to recognize two distinguished public servants who are leaving their positions at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, or USPTO,—Margaret “Peggy” Focarino, Commissioner for Patents, and James D. Smith, Chief Administrative Patent Judge. Both have played critical roles in bringing the USPTO into the 21st century by working tirelessly to implement the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act, the most comprehensive update of U.S. patent law since the 1950s. The patent system is one of the cornerstones of our economy. It drives innovation, growth, and job creation. This country has been fortunate to have dedicated leaders such as Ms. Focarino and Mr. Smith in key positions at this crucial Agency.

Peggy Focarino became Commissioner for Patents in 2012, where she has been instrumental in developing and implementing administrative changes made by the Leahy-Smith act. Working collaboratively with all stakeholders in the patent community while implementing this law is a hallmark of her tenure as Commissioner for Patents. As someone who worked for nearly 6 years to pass comprehensive patent reform legislation, I can attest to the fact that it is not easy to bring all of these stakeholders together and build consensus. The provisions she worked to implement include the transition to first-inventor-to-file and the USPTO's fee-setting authority, but her work encompassed a number of other aspects of the Leahy-Smith act as well.

Ms. Focarino's impressive tenure as Commissioner for Patents likely did not come as a surprise to anyone who

followed her rise within the USPTO. She started at the Agency in 1977 as a patent examiner. In 1997, she was promoted to the senior executive service. Throughout her almost 40 years at the USPTO, she distinguished herself as a leader within the Agency, receiving the Department of Commerce Silver Medal for Leadership in 2010. She also received American University's School of Public Affairs Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership in 2010. While the USPTO will continue to do important work without her, there is little doubt that her leadership will be missed.

James Smith also played a key role in the implementation of the Leahy-Smith act. Mr. Smith became the Chief Administrative Patent Judge in 2011. During his tenure, Mr. Smith worked to implement the postgrant review proceedings the law established. Thanks to Mr. Smith's leadership at the Patent Trial and Appeal Board, these postgrant proceedings have been successful in providing low-cost alternatives to litigation for reviewing the patentability of issued patents. His strong and varied background in the private sector, including time spent working on intellectual property issues at large companies and law firms, served him well as he helped the USPTO implement these essential components of the Leahy-Smith act.

It is always difficult to see good public servants leave their roles. Ms. Focarino and Mr. Smith can look back proudly at their record of public service and point to meaningful accomplishments that have improved the U.S. patent system. I wish them both the best in their new endeavors.

VOTING RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT ACT OF 2015

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I support the Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015, an important step on the road to protecting the right to vote for all Americans. It responds to a recent Supreme Court ruling that rolled back critical voting protections that had proven effective for decades and that Congress had reauthorized several times.

This landmark legislation would reaffirm the importance of the vote as a pillar of our democracy and restore a powerful shield to combat voting discrimination. I thank Senator LEAHY for his leadership on this bill, and I am proud to be an original cosponsor of a bill that protects access to the ballot box for all American citizens.

Mr. President, 50 years ago, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965, legislation that he called “a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory that has ever been won on any battlefield.” At the time he signed the bill into law, millions of Americans were denied the right to vote based on the color of their skin.